



General Certificate of Education

English Literature 5746

Specification B

**LTB1 Introduction to the Study of
Literature**

Report on the Examination

2007 examination - January series

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Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

LTB1 Introduction to the Study of Literature

This January examiners again reported seeing performances covering the whole of the mark range. It was pleasing to see several candidates score maximum marks; such work was of a very high calibre. It was especially pleasing as this work was produced after only one term of A level study. Many centres are preparing their candidates well for this examination and many candidates have good knowledge of their set texts. Having sound and detailed knowledge of the texts is of course a major requirement, not least of all because this is an Open Book examination and there is an expectation that candidates can find their way around the text easily. Bullet one of all questions also tests explicitly the candidates' knowledge of characters, plot threads, characters' attitudes and feelings and other aspects of narrative.

However, it was worrying to find that some candidates did not know their set texts well; indeed it was quite clear that for a disturbingly high number of candidates the whole text seemed barely to have been read at all. This was particularly evident in some part iii) responses to Questions 1a, 3b and 4b when candidates needed to move from a specific part of the text into the whole novel. Some candidates did not know of any specific letters to write about in the Austen question; several only wrote about Gatsby's party in Chapter 3 and although candidates did recognise that there was humour in *The Color Purple*, candidates were unable to move beyond Letters 20 and 44. Centres should perhaps reconsider January entry if their candidates do not yet know the set novel in detail.

The first bullet of the questions was generally well answered. Some very focused answers were seen to all questions. Those candidates who produced good answers generally wrote concisely, identified clear points and explained and supported them. The first bullet is the most straightforward bullet and all candidates should be able to make some relevant comments. Several of the questions on this winter's paper were on character (for example, 1a, 3b, 6a and 7a) and candidates ought to have been able to identify character traits if they had been taught to do so. Some candidates, however, still wrote about what the characters do and say rather than identify what is revealed about them. Many candidates who wrote about *Pride and Prejudice*, for example, could say little more than that Darcy is 'nice' or 'nasty' which are hardly terms appropriate to A level study. It would certainly help if candidates were encouraged to widen their vocabulary and comment precisely on such character traits as Darcy's politeness, his class consciousness, his dignity, his generosity and his self respect, for example. When centres are teaching for the first bullet they would do well to look at questions across the whole paper to see what specific tasks are being asked. Candidates should also be told that they need to quote from the text.

As in previous examinations, bullet two, where candidates are asked to write about narrative method, continued to cause some difficulty to some candidates. Some centres are preparing their students very thoroughly and candidates are thinking well about the structures of chapters, the subtleties of narrative perspective, voice, chronology, how dialogue is used and other aspects of narrative used in the prescribed chapters. When students are not performing well in this section it is often because they avoid the question and write about what happens in the chapter (this is sometimes no more than a repetition of what they have already written in bullet one) or they write general narrative points about the text and do not apply comments to the given chapter. Many answers contained generalisations like: 'Walker uses the epistolary form in this chapter and tells the story through Celie. She uses black American English and non-standard grammar'. Although such comments are relevant they need to be developed with supportive evidence and comment from the prescribed chapter. Several candidates are evidencing their observations of methodology from other sections of the novel suggesting that the answers are prepared and that the material produced could answer any question. Sometimes candidates are writing about what Austen **does not** do in the given chapter. This is

rarely productive. Good answers in response to AO3 will contain detail from the given chapter, which reflects understanding on how the writer's methods shape meanings.

The third bullet, which invites candidates to engage in debates around the text, is becoming more competently and more confidently answered by those centres and candidates where multiple meanings of texts are fundamental to thinking and teaching. The key to success here is to be aware that texts are open to different interpretations and to be able to argue from a personal perspective. Because candidates are required to range around the text in this answer, sound knowledge is essential. It is expected that candidates refer to three or four specific parts of the text in support of their ideas. Credit is given in this section for the candidates' ability to think and to argue. Candidates who produce weaker responses tend to pick out a word or two from the task and write anything known or vaguely related to those words, sometimes not understanding the words at all. This was particularly evident in responses to Question 4a iii) where many candidates wrote about sisterhood but were unable to deal with 'alienating to men' and in 5b, where 'enchanted' and 'corrupt' were not both considered. Indeed, many candidates who were writing on the *Gatsby* question replaced 'enchanted' with 'American Dream' without showing what might be enchanting about the Dream. Some took the line that Nick is enchanted by, but not corrupted by *Gatsby*, which was a good way into the task. Although some candidates did not write well on Austen's use of letters in *Pride and Prejudice*, many did. The most perceptive candidates saw the form as a way into other characters' consciousnesses or as a way of revealing something about those characters who receive the letters.

On the whole contextual material was used sparingly by candidates in the third bullet and in many cases it was made relevant to the tasks. However there was still evidence of irrelevant biographical material or quotations from secondary sources including critics. Often these references were lengthy and had presumably been written in their texts (which is illegal) or had been learned (which is a worrying waste of valuable time). When critical opinion was quoted it was very rare that it bore any relevance to the tasks.

In terms of AO1, there was some excellent writing, which showed sophistication and precision. Very high marks were given to those candidates who produced penetrating and fluent analyses. Some candidates wrote too much, perhaps in an attempt to impress, but actually produced loose, baggy structures that impeded clear communication of argument and ideas. Possibly connected with this desperation to fill as many pages as possible, proof reading was often poor. It would certainly help candidates in the future if they spent more time thinking about and crafting their responses

The most popular texts were *The Color Purple*, *The Great Gatsby* and *Pride and Prejudice*, but there was evidence that all seven texts were being studied. It was very pleasing to see the new text *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* in evidence; responses to this text were often lively and thorough, suggesting that teachers had taught the text with real enthusiasm. Some of the best answers were seen on the less popular texts, often because candidates were focusing more sharply on AO3 in *Waterland* and *The God of Small Things* and because these texts lend themselves well to discussion about how stories are told.

For those centres needing more help with this unit and particularly teachers new to the specification, previous examination reports should be scrutinised along with previous examination papers. Overall, though, there is much good work being done on LTB1.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.